

Metropolitan Homelessness Encampment Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, February 10, 2016

at Metro Social Services

800 2nd Avenue North

The meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Will Connelly, Wendell Segroves, Phil Duke, Traci Pekovitch, Lindsey Krinks, Brian Williams (sitting in for Sgt. John Bourqou), Tommy Linch, Marvin Cox, Charles Strobel, Renee Pratt, Alex Smith

Public: Chris Scott, Kate Wade, Lesley Head, Robbie Kelly, Samuel Lester, Denis Huey, Steve Lindstrom, Cayla Wilson

Staff: Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson

Approval of minutes:

The minutes from the February 3, 2016 meeting were approved.

Discussion among Task Force members:

Discussion ensued around creating recommendations regarding unsanctioned camps, decriminalizing homelessness, police outreach teams, protocols given to police teams on approaching people experiencing homelessness, regarding mental health and substance use, through a health lens and supportive services approach versus a criminal one.

Lindsey Krinks shared a document she put together with information regarding other cities' methods to incorporating police into homeless outreach approaches, as well as recommendations from those with lived experiences.

The task force members came up with several recommendation ideas:

- Have a mental health division and homeless outreach team within Metro Police in as step to decriminalize homelessness.
 - o Through this effort identifying already existing collaborations between police department and outreach in other communities.
- Looking at policies that can be enforced to decriminalize homelessness in Nashville. Look at other cities here as well.
- Coming up with guidelines and resources around unsanctioned camps that would allow them to be left alone and not have to constantly move.
- Explore costs and resources to implement recommendations.
- Guidance for police officers who encounter an unsanctioned camp including some responses options so that it is not always immediate removal.

Additional discussion occurred regarding how recommendations for housing must be incorporated, since housing is the end goal.

This discussion led to the following recommendation ideas:

- Sanction some camps, with services on site, on public property near a bus line and with designated funds that would provide water services. The sanctioned camp wouldn't necessarily be where the camps currently are. People can stay here while working toward housing.

- Look at existing government property that could be retrofitted for use for a sanctioned camp. Oversight and involvement will be with a government entity who can connect to the resources or a conglomerate of multiple partnership that provides oversight.
- Permitting encampments on religious property.

All of the recommendation ideas were categorized into three subset focuses:

- Leaving unsanctioned camps alone;
- Sanctioning all camps;
- Creating some central sanctioned camps with the goal of helping people move into housing.

The following individuals/organizations were identified by the task force as a helpful resource as future meetings:

- Metro Legal
- Metro Codes
- MDHA
- Health Department
- Public Defender's Office
- Metro 3 so that the meetings can reach more of the public
- Decision makers
- Green Street

Several task force members expressed frustration that no one from the Mayor's Office was present, despite having a seat on the task force, and that a proxy wasn't sent to take notes either.

Will Connelly suggested it might be helpful to draft the recommendations prior to inviting the guests for future meetings.

Public Input:

Denis Huey: States it was shame that no one from the Mayor's Office was present and felt someone should be there. The task force needs to be extended because if it is not, on April 1, all hell is going to break loose once they go to close Fort Negley. He likes many of the recommendations that Tommy Lynch provided.

Chris Scott: Forced dispersal from people from encampment settings is not a solutions and does not help to link them to permanent housing. Forcing someone to leave is not a solution.

Samuel Lester: It is going to be difficult to complete the goal of the task force in the timeline allowed but thinks that this is developing a framework for future discussion surrounding housing. They need to create a framework about how camps will be managed, because there won't be enough housing so the camps will still exist. Costs also need to be explored. The costs are more expensive when you don't create some type of managed system. If the costs could be framed in a way the city sees the benefit, it is harder to ignore it. Also thinks that the task force should be cautious to just brining in someone from Metro Legal; someone from the Public Defender's Office should be included as well because laws can be changed versus just hearing the current law. Criminalization pushes people further into homelessness rather than toward housing.

Steve Lindsrom: Is upset that the Mayor's Office is not present and holds a spot on the panel. Back to the trust issue, it seems like this ought to have a phased approach- short term of what can be done today, and medium and long term. The Downtown Partnership should be involved.

Phil Duke (task force member): Stated that he thinks that the Mayor's Office is very supportive of what is being done and he is satisfied. The Mayor's Office is very interested in what is being done and interested in hearing what the group comes up with.

Steve Lindstrom: Stated he voted for Mayor Barry based on that platform but words are cheap and actions speak louder.

Next Steps:

Denis Huey, from the public, asked how the task force defines "sanctioned?" Samuel Lester, from the public, stated that if you legalize some camps than you are ultimately making other unsanctioned camps illegal, criminalizing everyone outside the specific sanction camps. Task force members decided to begin the next meeting by discussing how they define sanctioned.

Lindsey Krinks made a motion that based on the three suggestions, the task force wants to start by focusing on a strategy to reduce homelessness by focusing on sanctioning some camps on public and private land as a transitional option until permanent housing becomes available.

- Traci Pekovitch seconded. The vote was passed unanimously.

Homework to prepare for next meeting:

Based on requests from both the task force members and public input, Judy Tackett will reach out to the Public Defender's Office, Codes, Metro Legal, Health Department, MDHA, Metro 3, and the Downtown Partnership to invite them upcoming meetings. She will follow up with task force members on when each plans to attend so that task force members can have questions ready. Lindsey Krinks will reach out to Green Street and invite them to an upcoming meeting.

Judy Tackett will also begin filling out the recommendation grids, with the suggestions from this meeting, and send out to task force members to begin tweaking.

Charlie Strobel stated that he is aware Chris Scott left the meeting early and hope the task force can continue to involve him in the process. Several task force members stated they would reach out to Chris.

Lindsey Krinks requested that task force members research what other cities homeless outreach teams, in partnership with the police, are doing and how police officers approach camps, along with examples of rules sanctioned camps in other communities use for oversight.

- Traci Pekovitch agreed to research outreach and police partnerships
- Tommy Lynch will provide research on how park property is being used across the country in regards to homelessness.
- Brian Williams will speak with Sgt. Borque about researching how police departments in other cities are creating and incorporating mental health/substance use teams
- At the request of Phil Duke, Renee Pratt will find out if there is vacant Metro property available for an encampment theoretically.

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 17 at 9:00 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2nd Avenue South.